



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

MUSIC.

LISZT'S DANTE SYMPHONY.

THE New York Philharmonic Society produced at the fifth concert of the season, on the 15th of March, a work which is commonly supposed to be one of the greatest examples of the new school of musical composition. Liszt's Symphony to the "Divina Commedia" of Dante presents perhaps the fullest development of the composer's theories of art, and the ripest fruit of his technical skill and science. To musicians, therefore, it has very strong attractions, and its performance, for the second time in this city in three years, was awaited with the greatest interest. To the average listener we must admit that it is a severe trial. No other of Liszt's works, that we now recall, exacts of the unlearned audience such a painful effort of mind, or appeals so exclusively to the higher intellectual powers. Of melody, and even of symmetrical musical phrases, it is absolutely barren. It is an attempt to represent, or at least to symbolize a state of existence from which the perception of beauty, the concord of sweet sounds, the harmony of form and tone, and the soothing influence of gentle emotions are forever banished. How a composition can be accommodated to these essentially unmusical conditions, and yet remain music, is a problem which vexes the curiosity. We may say that Liszt does not solve it. He gives us some exquisite music which does not agree with his subject, and he gives us some startling pictures of hell and purgatory, which are not music; but he does not combine the irreconcilable. He has taken for the subject of the symphony two divisions only of the "Divina Commedia," namely, the "Inferno" and the "Purgatorio." The first opens with a startling passage for the trombones, indicative of the inscription over the gates of hell,

"Through me the way is to the city dolent;"

and then comes the terrible curse, pealed forth with the blare of trumpets and horns,

"All hope abandon ye who enter in."

We plunge at once into the uproar of the abysmal circles. Shrieks, groans, lamentations, horrible jeers and curses, resound amid a tempest of commotion. The most extraordinary effect is produced by short bizarre solo phrases, uttered by various instruments in turn, now the bassoon, now the oboe, now the violoncello, while the other forces of the orchestra supply a subdued background of troubled sounds, dashing to and fro like some dark and fearful ocean, above which the cries are heard in startling relief. All this is frightful; it is suggestive; it is impressive—but it is not music. The storm is stilled for a brief space, and a plaintive passage, which Liszt describes as a dialogue, represents the sorrowful reminiscences of the lost souls, and calls to mind the lines of the poet,

"There is no greater sorrow
Than to be mindful of the happy time
In misery."

This part of the symphony is delicious; but it is soon broken by a recurrence of the curse, *Lasciate ogni speranza*, and the movement closes with a climax of accumulated horrors. In the "Purgatorio" the suggestions of suffering are relieved by the constant though distant prospect of liberation. We have here no cries of hopeless anguish, but rather a perpetual melancholy in the midst of which arises from time to time the voice of prayer. The opening is a Gregorian theme, and this is followed by a fugue which is supposed to indicate contrition, patience and hope. But strange to say, it has none of the pathos which the composer threw into the wail of the damned. It is sad; but it is insufferably wearisome, and it seems to us to have no interest apart from its remarkably ingenious resolutions of some of the great difficulties of counterpoint. The second part of the movement is much more pleasing. After the fugue a chorus of female voices, preluded by a few chords on the harp, intones the "Magnificat," and by degrees the voices and orchestra together swell to a grand climax of joy. The penalty has been paid, the work of purification is complete, and the redeemed souls enter triumphant into the joys of heaven.

So ends one of the most impressive of modern musical compositions. It certainly stirs the imagination, though it rarely touches the feelings, and its effect upon the whole is both perplexing and unpleasant. Does Liszt really point out the direction in which modern art is tending? We should be sorry to believe it; for music which merely agitates the colder intellectual faculties without getting near the heart, can never be food for the passions of the human soul—cannot be that gift,

"From heaven sent,
To cheer the soul when tired with human strife,
To soothe the wayward heart by sorrow rent,
And soften down the rugged road of life."

THE OPERA.

The opera company certainly did not improve during its provincial journey. It came back to New York in the latter part of February rather worse, if possible, than it went away—with the same singers, the same leaders, and nearly the same meagre repertory and with aggravated habits of carelessness, and apparently an inveterate objection to rehearsals. Yet Madame Lucca has not lost much popularity. Large audiences listened to her, with no remarkable enthusiasm indeed, but with quiet satisfaction. They accepted all that she did as proper, if not quite perfect. If she gave a new reading of a familiar part, it was taken for granted that the old way must have been wrong, and the prepossessions of only a year ago were forgotten. Her Mignon, for example, was a singular contrast to Nilsson's, and, to our taste, not a pleasant contrast. It was Mignon with all her freaks and naughtiness, but without her sentiment. Yet the public of New York has received it with quite as much favor as the same public bestowed last year upon the Mignon of the fair Swede, and has not been at the pains to inquire whether it is artistically true or false. Madame Lucca, in fact, is remarkably destitute of sentiment, and herein lies her great defect as an artist. In the characters which she first assumed in this country the defect was not very conspicuous. Her Selika was

picturesque; her Valentine was passionate and dramatic; her Margherita lacked the tender melancholy appropriate to Gounod's music, but it had so much of the homely simplicity of Goethe's heroine, that in our admiration for its fidelity to the poet, we forgot how imperfectly it interpreted the composer. In the Zerlina, however, of "Fra Diavolo," we saw how little Madame Lucca combines, with grace and prettiness of action, the more delicate and graceful emotions of true musical feeling. In the Zerlina of "Don Giovanni," the same thing was still more plainly manifest. With Mozart, indeed, she has very little sympathy. She excels in broad dramatic effects; she has no appreciation of the finer beauties which immortalize the work of this greatest of the operatic masters. Three months ago we said a few words of her Cherubino, in "Le Nozze di Figaro," and a subsequent hearing of her in the same part has strongly confirmed our former impression. The fascinating little page in this most wonderful of comic operas is one of the brightest creations in the whole range of the musical drama. He is a boy in sprightliness and animal spirits; but a true ardent lover in sentiment. He has reached that glowing time of life when the heart is first stirred by the tender passion, and everything is colored for him with the rosy atmosphere of dawning love. "Non so piu cosa," I know not what it is, he sings, that stirs my heart with these strange feelings, and sends through my frame this unwonted thrill. He pens verses to the object of his foolish passion. He steals the ribbon that has bound her hair. He mopes and cries when he is banished from the house that contains her. For her sake he puts on a girl's disguise, and exposes himself to ridicule, which a boy dreads more than danger. He is by turns amusing and melancholy, frolic and sentimental. Love, however, instigates all his actions, influences all his language, controls even his gayest freaks. Cherubino in love is indeed the central figure of the play. If the gallant little page, frisking through scene after scene and pushing his pretty face into the midst of every group, were not in this tender frame of mind, the story would lose its consistency and the music would miss its greatest charm. But Madame Lucca seems to forget the essence of the part. Her page is merely a spirited and rather comical boy. He rollicks through the various intrigues of the drama, and they hardly seem to touch him. He sings about his passion for the Countess as if it were the best joke in the world, and he scolds about the mysterious disturbance in his breast, in the famous "Non so piu cosa," as if he were telling of a playmate who had cheated at marbles. Surely there was never so jocund a boy as this pretty, curly-headed rascal, who trots about the castle and the garden, rubbing his hands and admiring his fine clothes; but then there was never so unsentimental a lover. Miss Kellogg, as the vivacious Susanna, is much better than the Cherubino; for she not only acts the part appropriately, but sings the music with great sweetness and expression. Of the rest of the cast there is not a word to be said in praise. The Figaro of Signor Moriami is dull beyond all conception; and what is this opera with a dull Figaro? Middle. Levielli, Sig. Sparapani, Mr. Lyall, Mrs. Schofield, Mr. Dubreuil—there was nothing in the performance of any of these ladies and gentlemen to kindle one spark of interest. We need hardly say that the chorus and orchestra were bad; they always are under the present management.

The part of Agatha, in the Italian version of "Der Freyschütz," represented in the third week of the season, has been pronounced by some critics one of the most magnificent of all Madame Lucca's rôles; but this praise seems to us extravagant. She does indeed produce with it an extraordinary effect, but she does not leave a permanent impression, because she does nothing to individualize the character. Her Agatha is nothing more, dramatically, than a dozen other loving young women in white muslin, and differs in nothing save the relative excellence or defects of the singing, from the many other Agathas to whom we have, from time to time, listened. Her triumphs are won entirely by two pieces of musical elocution which have no essential dramatic connection with the development of the story; they might be separated from the opera, and performed in a concert room, or interpolated between the scenes of some other work, without losing any of the effects by which Madame Lucca makes them remarkable. The first of these pieces is the famous "Wie nahte mir der Schlummer," in the second act; the other is the "Und ob die Wolke," in the fourth. The andante in each of these she sings with beautiful expression, and if she fails to make the prayer emotional it is because she has not really a sympathetic nature; it is in strong passions rather than in tender emotions that she most deeply impresses her audience. The "Wie nahte mir," in fact, was not a specially smooth bit of cantabile delivery; but when she came to the second part of that scena, with its quick-changing character of joyous vivacity, she showed us something of her true genius. This magnificent passage thoroughly aroused the house, and she was called back after it again and again. The "Und ob die Wolke" had no such exciting measures; but it was very sweetly and gracefully delivered, with more warmth than we should have expected.

CONCERTS.

The second concert of the New York Vocal Society, given March 6th, was quite as good as the first. There were comparatively few madrigals, but those few were among the best of their kind, and not the least successful of them was Mr. Caryl Florio's "Farewell to May." Mr. Florio has caught the true spirit of the old madrigalists, and his composition is a model of its kind—graceful, fanciful, melodious, and elaborate. There was a charming trio by Henry Leslie, entitled "Memory," and a beautiful four-part song, "Silent Night," by John Barnby. A chorus and two chorals, from Bach's "Fifth Motette," were admirably sung. The concert of the Onslow Quintette, on the 5th of March, had for its principal features Mozart's string quartette in B flat, and a quintette in C sharp minor, by Carl Grädener, of which the former was by far the most successful. Grädener is a Hamburg musician of repute, who has written a great deal of chamber-music, songs, piano-pieces, etc. An excellent workman, and a man of ideas, he does not, at least in this quintette, possess the art of sustaining the interest of his listeners through a long and elaborate composition. The vocal music at this concert comprised two part-songs of Mendelssohn's, one by G. Macfarren, and one—a very good quintette—by Mr. Caryl Florio.

ART.

THE KENSSETT SALE.

ONE need not be a very old inhabitant to note the enormous strides that Art has taken in New York within the last thirty years. He has only to recall the old Art Union, and the kind of work that figured at its exhibitions, and compare it with what he can see any day by dropping in at the picture shops. It would seem invidious to name some of the painters who were then called fine artists, but it is safe to say that most of them are forgotten. They filled their places, whatever they were, and passed away to make room for a younger and abler generation, who learned from their failures how not to fail themselves. If any of Cole's pupils took to painting allegories and religious landscapes, we have not heard of them. We may say the same, minus the landscapes, of Rossiter's pupils, if he ever had any. The truth is that our artists have learned what Art is, and what Art is not, and our picture lovers and picture buyers are learning the same lesson. Whether they have shot ahead of, or fallen behind, the artists, is a question which remains, we think, unsettled. They are getting to be tolerable judges of Art, better judges, indeed, than the average artist desires them to be, for they are outgrowing or have outgrown him. It could not well be otherwise, in view of the great number of good pictures which are on exhibition here, and which during the last three or four months have amounted to hundreds, to speak within bounds. There was, for example, the Exhibition of American and English Water Color Artists; there was the Beaumont Collection; there were other collections whose names have escaped us; and there was the Kensett Collection and Sale. The last was the event of the year—the event of many years, as regards American Art, and a very curious event it was, when one comes to consider it calmly.

The Collection filled the entire Academy of Design—literally filled every foot of the walls of all the rooms; and it was not all on exhibition, either, for the spaces gave out before the pictures did. There were upward of a thousand in all. Out of this number six hundred and ninety-four were sold at auction, of which less than fifty were by other artists, the sale occupying the evenings of the last week in March. Think of, say, six hundred and fifty pictures by one painter, who died before he was fifty-five, and who in his lifetime never sold half that number! Was there ever such a monument of industry as this? And was it a desirable one? It was, perhaps, as far as the knowledge of the artist was concerned—for no artist can know too much, but as regards his practice we are not so certain. That it has added any to the reputation of Kensett we do not believe. Kensett himself could not have desired the sale of his whole Collection, if it be true, as we have been told, that he would not sell a picture that did not satisfy him, and that he never sold his sketches. It was instructive to visit the Academy when the Collection was on exhibition, and see what pictures had the greatest crowds before them. It was instructive, also, to hear what was said about them. One could see at a glance that Kensett was a favorite artist, and that most of his admirers there were poor judges of his work. Their raptures—and there was little else than rapture—were often absurd. We can say this, now that the Exhibition and the Sale are over and it will hurt nobody.

But the Sale? There never was anything like it here. It did not appear to be engineered much, or not more than is customary on such occasions, but its success was simply stupendous. The large Lecture Room of the Y. M. C. A. Building was crowded nightly with buyers, and the difficulty seemed to be—who should pay the most. The auctioneer would start with an imaginary bid of one or two hundred dollars, upon which bid, then made actual, some enthusiastic person would toss another actual hundred dollars, to be immediately followed by a similar enthusiast, who had several fifty dollars that he was ambitious to invest. This occurred—not once, or twice, or ten times, but over and over again. Bidders would bid against themselves, without seeming to know it, or care for it, determined to have what they wanted, and they generally got it—at twice or thrice the sum they would have paid if they only kept cool. Sometimes two would claim a picture that had just been knocked down. It would be put up again, and they would proceed to punish each other, until the one who could stand it no longer would stop, occasionally to the discomfiture of the other, who suddenly woke to the fact that he had been making a fool of himself. If the disputed picture had been the best in the Collection, or one of the best, the bystanders could have understood, and, to a certain extent, have sympathized, with the feeling of the rival bidders; but such was not the fact. The picture was—just what it happened to be, and the buyer—just who happened to have taken a fancy for it. Art did not enter into the duel at all; it was the senseless fight of empty heads and full purses.

Understand us. We do not mean to say that the whole Sale was characterized by such proceedings; nor that all who bought pictures in it were ignorant of their value. Far from it. Many bought wisely, if dearly, and a few bought wisely, and cheaply. As a rule the smaller the picture was, the better it was, provided that it was a picture, and not the merest sketch of one. Kensett's finished sketches were admirable, but they were few in number as compared with his unfinished ones, which, for the most part, were hints that he probably understood, and possibly other artists, but nothing more. They had no value as Art, or none that a layman could perceive. The enthusiasts who bought them will dispute this proposition, no doubt, but it is true, nevertheless, as they will discover when their ardor has cooled off. They will tire of their daubs of rock, their bits of water, their streaks of sky and cloud, and will wish they had something better instead, which will be to wish they had understood Kensett better. As an artist he was singularly refined and poetic, and what was native to his genius he did better than anybody else. This, we believe, is the verdict that his brother artists would sanction. He attempted some things for which he was not fitted—as what artist does not?—and in these he succeeded only tolerably.

The moral of the Kensett sale, for it has one, is not that the American people are indifferent judges of Art—for we maintain the contrary—but that they can be carried away, as a people sometimes are, by a sudden epidemic. There was a Kensett Epidemic which nobody quite understood, and which nobody wishes to see repeated. It would have humiliated Kensett. It paid his executors, however, since it netted a hundred and twenty odd thousands of dollars!